

Superstition and a Trio

By EPES W. SARGENT

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"And the one who looks over your shoulder into the water is the man you will marry," concluded Mrs. Pleasanton. "I never knew it to fail."

John Pleasanton smiled behind his newspaper. Halloween superstitions were nonsense, but here was an opportunity for advancing Jim Howell's chances. If Grace believed in such things what was easier than sending Howell to the spring to appear at the opportune moment? And the best of the joke would be that his wife was aiding him to circumvent Harry Powers, the maternal choice for son-in-law.

"But there is no well to look down," protested Grace. "Our well is a pump."

"The spring will do even better," was the confronting assurance. Grace admired.

"Go alone to the spring at midnight!" she cried.

"I'll go with you!" cried Pax, her small brother, who found some relief in Latin from his Puritan name of Peaceful. Mrs. Pleasanton held up her hands in horror.

"Indeed you will not!" she cried in shocked tones. "That would break the spell. Grace must go alone." And she smiled to herself as she thought of her cleverness in providing Powers with an opportunity to propose under properly romantic conditions.

She knew that Grace would like Harry were it not that Vance Waddell had gained her fancy. It was merely a passing fancy, and with superstition to aid him Harry would have no trouble in displacing his rival. It was only her husband's stubborn insistence upon Jim Howell which had prevented her from ousting Waddell before. She could have dealt with a single opposition, but the two were against her, and she must resort to strategy.

She did not dream that her husband had paid no attention to her talk, so she smiled placidly to herself over her sewing in the thought that on the morrow victory would perch upon her banners, while on the opposite side of the



"IT AIN'T POLITE TO SCRAP ABOUT MARRIED LADIES."

table her better half chuckled at the pit she had dug for herself. Neither thought of Pax.

Jim Howell, pacing up and down by the stream the following evening, heard footsteps and became suddenly alert. A moment and a shadow crossed his face. The firm tread he heard never could be Grace approaching. He stepped back into the shadow of the big butternut tree which shaded the spring just as Harry Powers burst through a tangle of brush and approached the spring.

The latter's quick eyes detected his rival's form, though not his identity, and with a spring he was upon him. "I'll teach you tramps to hang around private property," he cried; then his grip upon the other's coat relaxed as they came into the moonlight, and he could see the face of his captive.

"What are you hanging around here for?" he demanded.

"I was just coming over from Bascom's and thought I'd like a drink of spring water," was the easy explanation. It never would do to let Powers know that he expected Grace.

"Wonder you didn't stop at the house," growled Powers. "You're always hanging around here."

"I was afraid I'd run into you," retorted Jim. "Somehow you always seem to be there yourself."

"If I am, I'm welcome," was the response. "Mrs. Pleasanton was saying the other night she never seemed to have a chance for a nice quiet chat, some one else always keeps butting in."

"You could have all the chance you want," advised Howell. "If you wasn't bothering Grace all the time. Mr. Pleasanton was saying just the other night that Grace ought to know all your jokes by heart now."

"He laughed at that one about the

girl and the cow the other night," asserted Powers aggressively.

"Yes," admitted Jim. "He said it reminded him of the first minstrel show he ever saw—back in the sixties."

"If you want a drink," suggested Powers, abandoning the warfare, "you will find the cup on the tree there."

"I'm not in a hurry," was the placid response. "I kinder like the quiet here. I'd like to sit here alone for an hour or so and jest sort of think things over."

"I think we'd both better be getting along," suggested Powers, with a glance at his watch. "It's getting on I'll go as far as Jenkins' with you."

"What time is it?" demanded Jim. "Half past 11," Powers showed the watch dial. Howell figured that it would take ten minutes to walk on to Jenkins' with Powers. He would go up the road a little way and then make a cut across the fields and be back before 12.

Together they turned toward the road, and after a brisk walk Powers turned in at the Jenkins gate, and Jim kept on up the road. A little distance beyond a clump of trees threw an ink blackness over the dust marked path, and in their friendly shelter Jim climbed the fence and made a bee line for the spring.

He was still panting from his exertions as he reached the butternut and encountered Powers' wrathful glance.

"Thought you were going to town," he jeered.

"Thought you had business with Jenkins," retorted Jim.

"Jenkins wasn't home," announced Powers unobtrusively.

"So you came back to get a drink," laughed Jim appreciatively. "You had better get it and be going on. I've an engagement here, to tell the truth, and I don't want you hanging around."

"You?" sneered Powers, abandoning pretense. "Why, Mrs. Pleasanton fixed the whole thing up for me."

"She did not," contradicted Jim. "You must have heard somehow and just come around to spoil things, as usual."

"Spill things!" echoed Powers indignantly. "I like that. Why, if I had less patience I'd have thrashed you long ago for an interfering busybody."

"If you had had more sand you'd have tried it long ago," taunted Jim. "It's because you know you can't lick me you've kept off. I'd have thrashed you long ago if it hadn't seemed such a shame to put it on a chap who can't defend himself."

Five minutes later two men with bruised and bleeding faces abandoned hostilities by common consent to face a small boy with a broad grin upon his face.

"What you fellows fighting for?" demanded Pax. "You ain't scrappin' about Grace, be ye?"

"What if we are?" asked Howell.

"Nothin' much," was the cool answer, "only it ain't polite to scrap about married ladies."

"Whose married?" demanded the pair.

"You see," explained Pax, "you fellows ain't treated me right. You could come an' see Grace and you didn't care about me. Now, ma wouldn't let Vance come around or let Grace go out with him, and so he had to write letters, and I took 'em for him. He was nice to me and you fellows weren't."

"Last night I could see what ma was up to, and I could tell pa was goin' to try the same thing. I figured out that you'd be out of the way and ma'd not be worryin' about Grace, so she skipped off with Vance and went to Stillwater to get married."

Silently Jim and Powers resumed their coats and together they started for the village. Pax called them back.

"Say," he advised sagely, "nex' time you fellows want to get married you remember that I did this and you get bunks with the brother; never mind her pa and ma."

Queer Freak of Memory.

The French scientist Ribot in his work on "Diseases of the Memory" tells of a man thirty years of age of considerable learning and acquirements who was found at the termination of a severe illness to have lost the recollection of everything, even the names of the most common objects. As soon as his health was restored he began to acquire knowledge like a child. After learning the names of objects he was taught to read and after this began to learn Latin. He made considerable progress when one day in reading his lesson with his brother, who was his teacher, he suddenly stopped and put his hand to his head.

"What is the matter? Don't you feel well?" asked his brother.

"I feel a peculiar sensation in my head," he replied, "and now it seems to me I knew all this before."

Strange to say, from that time he rapidly recovered his faculties and could never understand how it had been necessary to teach him reading and writing when he was thirty years of age and proficient in both.

A Tight Ring.

To remove a tight ring from the finger take a long thread of silk and put one end under the ring and draw it through several inches, holding it with the thumb in the palm of the hand. Then wind the long end of the silk tightly round the finger down to the nail. Take hold of the short end of the silk and, holding it toward the finger, unwind it, and the silk, pressing against the ring, will withdraw it.

Time Limit Fixed.

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